



IFES Quarterly Report: January 1, 2005 – March 31, 2005

Ethiopia Civil Society Capacity Building for Elections 2005/2006

USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00

Project Period: January 1, 2005 – July 1, 2006

Total Budget: \$795,562 Expenses Recorded to Date: \$123,618

Results Statement

- IFES/Ethiopia office was established.
- IFES Project Manager Stephen Beale met with representatives from ERIS to coordinate monitoring and evaluation of civic and voter education events leading up to the May 2005 general election. Meetings were also held with donors, the Carter Center, NDI and IRI.
- IFES completed organizational assessments of local CSOs and engaged them in discussions regarding modalities for supporting voter and civic education activities for the 2006 local elections.
- IFES hired a full-time local Project Coordinator.
- IFES Project Manager made recommendations for sub-award recipients.
- On March 30, 2005, IFES was instructed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to leave Ethiopia within 48 hours. As a result, all program activities were suspended, local staff was given severance pay, and the Project Manager departed Ethiopia.

Background

There are approximately six weeks remaining until the Parliamentary Elections scheduled for May 15, 2005. While the election process may be more transparent than previous elections, there is a sense of apathy and resignation towards the outcome of the election, which most acknowledge is a foregone conclusion. Nevertheless, most Ethiopians feel that 2005 will be an improvement over previous elections. There are also signs that the ruling party is willing to engage in more democratic and inclusive activity and dialogue with the opposition, civil society and the voting population at large. The frequency and quality of political party debates is unprecedented, civil society has been invited to observe the election and demands from university students to vote in their places of study rather than their home constituencies have been met.

The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) is holding bi-monthly press conferences and has recently launched a website¹. Voter registration has been completed with approximately 25.5 million people eligible to vote.

¹ With technical assistance from ERIS and funding provided through the donor basket mechanism.

While the government has talked about providing licenses to independent radio stations, progress is slow and licenses will not be issued before the election. Furthermore, there has been no movement on the contentious NGO and press draft laws.

Activities

IFES/Ethiopia commenced program activities in mid-December 2004. This followed a briefing for the Project Manager at IFES headquarters and meetings with USAID/Washington. The program start-up phase served to introduce IFES to stakeholders engaged in elections, civic education and democratization in Ethiopia. While IFES program objectives are primarily concerned with building the capacity of civil society to develop voter and civic education for the approaching elections, emphasis during this period was placed on introducing IFES to the donor community, government, NEBE and other stakeholders.

The IFES/Ethiopia office has opened and furniture and equipment has been purchased. IRI is sub-letting office space from IFES. USAID has been requested to procure a program vehicle and has acquired quotations.

Local staff has been hired, including an office assistant/driver, house keeper/cleaner and two security guards. During the program start-up phase, a short term consultant was hired to provide advice and guidance during the CSO assessment. IFES Ethiopia recently employed a full-time Project Coordinator to monitor and evaluate CSO activities during the election period.

Sub-award Recommendations:

IFES has completed the process of assessing potential sub-award recipients and recommends that the following Ethiopian CSOs are supported:

- 1) A sub-award of \$40,000 for African Initiatives for a Democratic World Order (AIDWO), the ad-hoc civic education forum's treasurer, on the understanding that the forum will develop voter and civic education materials tailored for the 2006 local elections. The forum's management committee would provide guidance and oversight for progressing activities and be responsible for reporting to IFES.
- 2) "Afroflag Youth Vision", a relatively inexperienced CSO that has recently expanded into a national youth association, receive a sub-award of \$25,000 to develop innovative voter and civic education activities, including theater, street campaigns, road shows and youth resource centers.
- 3) Civic Education Ethiopia (CEE), a CSO with 8 years experience and a founding member of the ad-hoc forum, receive a sub-award of \$10,000 to conduct voter and civic education activities in the Somali Region for the August 2005 national election.

Activities Planned for Next Quarter

Activities for the next quarter had included issuing sub-awards to selected CSOs, monitoring and evaluating voter and civic education events and, pending approval, observing the election.

All program activities, however, are currently on hold pending reversal of the Ethiopian government's decision to expel IFES and its CEPPS partners.